



DEFINITION OF VETERAN

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ISSUE

How do the federal government and Connecticut define veteran for purposes of providing benefits? Summarize the state benefits not requiring wartime service or disability.

SUMMARY

In order to receive veterans benefits under federal or state law, a person must meet the definition of a "veteran." The federal government has one definition of veteran, while the state defines a veteran generally in two ways.

Under federal law, a veteran is a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable ([38 U.S.C. § 101\(2\)](#)).

State law generally defines a veteran as an individual honorably discharged or released under honorable conditions from active duty in the armed forces (U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Air Force and any of their reserve components, including the Connecticut National Guard performing duty under Title 32 of federal law (e.g., certain Homeland Security missions)) ([CGS § 27-103\(a\)](#)). But for certain benefit programs, the law defines a veteran as anyone discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable (e.g., general discharge) from active service in the armed forces, thus allowing more veterans to qualify for these programs.

STATE VETERANS BENEFITS REQUIRING HONORABLE DISCHARGE

Admission to the Veterans' Home

Veterans who need medical or surgical care and treatment are eligible for admission to the Veterans' Home. Those with no adequate means of support are also eligible for admission to certain hospitals at state expense unless other funds or means of

payment are unavailable (CGS §§ [27-108](#) & [27-103\(b\)](#)). The veterans' affairs commissioner has sole power to determine who is admitted to these facilities.

Burial in the State Veterans' Cemetery

Any veteran or his or her spouse or next of kin may ask the veterans' affairs commissioner to be buried in the state veterans cemetery. Veterans and one spouse are eligible for such burial ([CGS § 27-122b](#)).

Death Certificate Fee Waiver

A veteran's spouse, child, or parent is entitled to have the \$20 fee waived for one certified copy of the veteran's death certificate ([CGS § 7-74](#)).

Employment

State and municipal employers must reinstate to his or her former position an employee who left service to enter the armed forces if he or she applies within 90 days after receiving a certificate confirming satisfactory military service. The state or municipal employer must certify in writing that the employee is able and qualified to perform the work required and that there is work available (CGS §§ [5-255](#) and [7-462](#)).

High School Examination Fee Waiver

Veterans are exempt from paying the \$13 fee to take or retake the examination for the state high school diploma (general equivalency diploma or GED) ([CGS § 10-5](#)).

Unemployed Armed Forces Member Subsidized Training and Employment Program. This program provides grants to subsidize a business's costs of hiring honorably discharged unemployed veterans during their first 180 days on the job. These veterans must have served at least 90 days or have been separated from service earlier due to a service-connected disability ([CGS § 31-3uu](#)).

Motor Vehicle License

A veteran who applies within two years of receiving an honorable discharge is exempt from paying motor vehicle operator's license and registration fees for one licensing period ([CGS § 14-50\(c\)](#)).

State law allows any type of motor vehicle owned or leased by a veteran or his or her surviving spouse for one year or longer to qualify for special veterans' license plates ([CGS § 14-20b](#)).

Occupational Licenses

A veteran whose hairdressing or cosmetology license expired while he or she was in the armed services may have it reinstated without paying the \$5 renewal fee ([CGS § 20-256](#)).

The Department of Public Health (DPH) may suspend any provision of law governing qualifications for opticians with respect to World War II and Korean War veterans if the department deems the provision unjust and the suspension does not jeopardize public health and safety ([CGS § 20-147](#)).

When a veteran's embalmer or funeral director's license expires while he or she is in the armed forces, DPH may waive the examination required for reinstatement, provided the department approves the veteran's professional qualifications. The veteran must apply within a year of separation from service ([CGS § 20-228](#)).

Licensing and Registration Exemptions

Veterans are exempt from annual and biennial license and registration fees or occupational taxes for one year after they are honorably discharged from active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces ([CGS § 27-102a](#)).

Veterans' Registry

The law requires the Veterans' Affairs Department to develop and maintain a contact list of armed forces members, including guard members, and honorably discharged veterans living in Connecticut to facilitate informing listed persons about benefits and services available to, and legislation affecting, them ([CGS § 27-100c](#)).

Veterans Status on Driver's License and Identity Card

The DMV commissioner must include a person's status as a veteran, if applicable, on his or her state driver's license or identity card. The person must submit a request to have this status included to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, which must verify the status to the DMV commissioner ([CGS § 14-36h\(e\)](#)).

State Identification Card Fee Waiver for Blind Veterans

The law authorizes the DMV commissioner to waive the \$22.50 non-driver identification card fee for any applicant who is a blind veteran ([CGS § 1-1h](#)).

Certain Veterans Benefits Not Included in Assistance Program Eligibility Calculations

To the extent allowed under federal law, state law directs the social services commissioner to disregard a veteran's or surviving spouse's federal Aid and Attendance Pension benefits when calculating income for certain means-tested assistance programs (e.g., Medicaid) ([CGS § 17b-28i](#)).

Security Deposit Program

By law, the Department of Housing, through its Security Deposit Guarantee Program and within available appropriations, must provide security deposit guarantees (payment for any damages that occur) to financially eligible people living in emergency housing or receiving a government rental subsidy. The law requires the commissioner to prioritize providing these guarantees to eligible veterans ([CGS § 8-339](#)).

Veterans Agriculture Program

This program gives a tax incentive to encourage certain veterans to start a farming business. Specifically, the law relaxes the conditions eligible veterans must meet to qualify for a sales and use tax exemption permit for property used exclusively in commercial agricultural production ([CGS § 12-412\(63\)\(D\)](#)).

Veterans Small Business

[PA 16-184](#), effective October 1, 2016, provides certain veteran-owned businesses with up to a 15% price preference for certain Department of Administrative Services open market orders or contracts. These businesses must have gross revenue of up to \$3 million in the most recently completed fiscal year and have at least 51% of the ownership be held by one or more veterans.

STATE BENEFITS NOT REQUIRING HONORABLE DISCHARGE

The following benefits are available to veterans discharged or released from active service under conditions other than honorable.

Pretrial Diversionary Programs

The law allows veterans to participate in accelerated rehabilitation twice, instead of only once, as allowed by law for non-veterans ([CGS § 54-56e](#)). The accelerated rehabilitation program is available for people accused of certain crimes or motor vehicle violations. The law also allows veterans (1) participating in the pretrial drug education program or (2) with certain mental health conditions that are amenable

to treatment to be assigned to state and federal departments of veterans' affairs services as an alternative to services from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (CGS §§ [54-56i](#) and [54-56l](#)). (Pretrial diversionary programs allow criminal defendants to avoid prosecution and incarceration by successfully completing these court-sanctioned community-based treatment programs before trial.)

Tuition Credit

The law requires public higher education institutions to award college credit for military occupational specialty training to veterans enrolled at the institutions ([CGS § 10a-149d](#)). The applicant must have experience in a military occupation the institution recognizes as substituting for, or meeting the requirements of, a particular course of study.

Licensure and Certification for Military Training

The law requires state agencies or boards that issue licenses or certificates requiring professional training, schooling, or apprenticeship to provide credits or exemptions to applicants who received applicable training, schooling, or experience while serving in the armed forces. It prohibits agencies from requiring applicants to repeat any substantively similar training or schooling required for licensure or certification ([CGS § 27-102b](#)).

The law also requires various government entities to certify, waive, grant, or award certain licenses, registrations, examinations, training, or credit for veterans with military experience or qualifications similar to those otherwise required. For qualified veterans, the law requires the:

1. Police Officer Standards and Training Council to certify them as police officers ([CGS § 7-294d](#));
2. Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to waive certain examinations or tests for motor vehicle operator's licenses ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#));
3. Department of Labor to submit a recommendation for review that waives the apprentice requirement to the appropriate licensing board and Department of Consumer Protection to allow the applicants to sit for licensing exams (CGS §§ [20-333](#) & [31-22u](#));
4. Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to waive security guard training ([CGS § 29-161q](#)); and
5. DPH to certify them as emergency medical technicians ([CGS § 19a-179](#)).

Motor Vehicle License Waiver

A veteran may request waiver of the motor vehicle license examination if he or she (1) applies within two years of separation from service and (2) previously held a military operator's license ([CGS § 14-36\(e\)](#)).

Special Operations Resource Network

[PA 16-68](#) requires the labor commissioner to establish a special operations resource network as a clearinghouse for veterans and armed forces members who, as part of their military training, acquired knowledge, experience, or skills most compatible with certain professional opportunities.

Veterans may apply to be included in the database by submitting evidence of their military training that describes the particular knowledge, experience, or skill set acquired. The commissioner must evaluate applications and categorize applicants in the database.

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